6/26/72

Dear Harold,

I received your recent mailings today, and there is nothing with which I would take issue or to which I would object.

With respect to the letter you wrote Gary and Jerry immediately after talking to me, you are correct that I stipulated no conditions of confidentiality over the phone. When I wrote the letter (which you received the next day after mailing your letter) It was my attitude that I did not wish to be associated with the information I was reporting to you. I suppose that is what I would have preferred. But it is not really that important to me that you could not respect my initial desire for confidence; in fact, it is just as well that there be one less secret. After thinking about it, I have decided that I have nothing to protect, and no reason to fear repercussions from Sylvia or Jerry. Sylvia did not tell me that in confidence, and I had a very legitimate reason for telling you. As for Jerry, I have in the past violated confidences with him to disclode info to you which I felt you should know, and which I felt was not in Jerry's ability to decide that you shouldn't know. In this case, I have violated no confidence with him, even if Sylvia did (I don't know for sure that she did, but I suspect it). At any rate, don't feel bad that you couldn't preserve my confidentiality. I am confident that neither Jerry nor Sylvia can justifiably hold this against me; if they do, that is their business. I feel I did right.

I am particularly glad that you have taken the position you have regarding my decision on whether or not I should help Wecht. For you with respect to me, I think you have taken the only right course. It is my decision, and it is an extremely hard one, because I cannot know in advance who will prove "right," and whichever way I decide, I will suffer misgivings. As you know by now, I have decided that I have an obligation to help Wecht. I have attached conditions to such help, as the enclosed memo explains. As of now, Wecht has not called me and I expected a call from him on Saturday. Sylvia was to call him and have him call me. Don't know what the reason for the delay is, but I think it probable that Sylvia told him of my reluctance and misgivings, in addition to the extent to which I am in accord with you (esp. on the use of your material) and now he is questioning whether he should ask me for help. To quote Sylvia apologizing for Wecht in another case, "it would be too humiliating." If that is the way he wants to be, let him. I've no illusions about him, and if he is disgruntled that I am not pushing to help him in his "noble effort," tough shit. But I am perhaps pre-judging. I've already prepared myself to brief him, and as I did this, which included reviewing all of the medical evidence and critics writings (excluding PM), it became quite apparent to me that if neither of us consults him prior to his examination, there is no one who could give him anything near an adequate briefing. I've even prepared an outline of what he should do during the exam, including comparing each print to the negative, to make sure it is the best print possible; to make a complete inventory of what he is shown, beginning with the Panel list, and with spaces for details like the number of prints, color, b&w or transparancy, size, etc.; to request what is not included but officially should be and, if it cannot be provided, then to demand an accounting for its absence. In listing what he should look for in the pix and X-rays, several new things have struck me. One is that the entire neck does not seem to have been X-rayed, the upper part most likely not included in the X-rays described so far, which might mean other fragments not shown.

If you wish to take the time to express your opinion on the choice I have made, then I would welcome whatever you have to say. I am not demanding your opinion, and I don't think it will make me change my mind, since I made my decision with the full knowledge of your own position, and, if it seems a contradiction, in general agreement with it.

I must say that your lengthy letter to Sylvia impressed me extremely. I have asked myself to what extent are your views in this area influenced by the tremendous interests you have in your own work, and to what extent is it justified.

This is not a reflection of my trust or confidence in you; these are questions I must ask myself, as I think you can realize. There are times, esp. when I am swamped with Sylvia's passionate rhetoric, that I am not sure if you are capable of thinking beyond your own interests in terms of the medical evidence, or at least that your heavy interests prevent you from making sober, reliable judgements. But this letter to Sylvia is a great reassurance to me, not only that you can think soberly and rationally with all the interests you have, but also under the horrible emotional burden of the news I brought. I have read that letter over and over, and I hope Sylvia has the decency to read it carefully and openly; still, knowing Sylvia and her hang-ups, it is expecting a lot that she would let your letter change her attitude or cause her to rethink it. Nevertheless, I am unspeakably glad that you wrote such a letter to her. I presume that much of it was in reference to my lengthy memo of our phone conversation. Since I have known her, she has often expressed such things to me regarding her views about you. I have elected, for the most part, not to convey them to you. Now I felt it was time. I am sorry I waited as long as I did.

These are things which Sylvia tells others as well. She is always sure to mention her deep respect for your work (let her actions speak for the depth of her "respect"), and her sympathy for your position, nevertheless there is a deep personal rift between the two of you. I detected it from the moment I spoke with her, which was virtually the moment we began discussing you. In many personality traits, you and Sylvia are very much alike, and for that reason you are potentially incompatible. It obviously affects her more than you. I really think it is just about all a personal hang-up about you that has caused Sylvia to act as she has. But, as I have tried so futilely to tell her, whether or not people like you or can tolerate you has no bearing on moral and ethical questions regarding the use of your work, as well as other considerations quite removed from matters of personality. But that, to a large degree, is the universal cop-out she offers in apologising for those who crap on you. She knows my position. And if it is not in my character to present its with the force and passion with which the both of you present your positions, it is a position which I have never changed, and, to her consternation, she is quite aware of that.

I will keep you updated on everthing that happens regarding Wecht access. Again, I am greatly encouraged at the position you have taken regarding my decision to brief Wecht. I am sorry that the things which have happened recently have caused you so much pain; but you are not too old to learn from them. One of the things that I have learned for sure in my short life has been that nothing teaches better than pain and hurt. Still, knowing that there is a lesson to be learned does not ease the pain, and my heart goes out to you that you must suffer so from those who you trusted and loved.

Best,

Howard